

# QLH-S3.08M: Strait-Jacket

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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

people, woman, lucy, joan crawford, films, movie, carol, murder, mother, daughter, express, sympathetic, dolly, sub genre, interesting, distasteful, emotions, talk, older, character

## SPEAKERS

Jessi Chartier, Jen Myers

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**J** Jessi Chartier 00:04

Welcome to Quiet Little Horrors. Here we talk about the films that creep under your skin and take up residence in the dark. Let's talk about Strait-Jacket.

**J** Jen Myers 00:20

We talk about movies. So we're going to talk about parts of movies that may be spoilers. If that doesn't bother you, you can keep on listening. Or you can hit the pause button and go watch the films that we're talking about before you continue here. Consider yourself warned.

**J** Jessi Chartier 00:38

So we should probably cover the synopsis first for our listeners here. Jen, did you want me to cover? Uh, do you want to try taking a stab at it?

**J** Jen Myers 00:48

Yeah, you take a stab at this, no pun intended. And then I'll add something if I need if I feel like.

**J** Jessi Chartier 00:54

I love it. Alright, so the quick, short version of it is that a woman, an older woman marries a younger man, she catches him in the act of cheating on her. And she kills both of them. And they send her to an insane asylum because they claimed she was insane, as opposed to just you know, a good old fashioned murder. And then the moot that's like the beginning of the movie, and then the whole movie is about her, returning after her being, quote, cured from her insanity. And it's been like 20 years. And so she returns to her daughter, who's now I think, in

her early 20s. Yes, of course, because it was 20 years in her early 20s, who is living with her brother and his wife. So the the daughter's aunt and uncle moved, moved into things. And I think things just go awry. Things just go awry. So people start dying. And everybody's wondering, oh, God, Oh, God. Is it the woman who has returned to her previous insanity? What is the issue? And so that's kind of the whole synopsis of the movie. Did I miss anything? Jen?

**J** Jen Myers 02:09

I think the only thing maybe to kind of highlight is that Carol, the daughter wants to marry and her potential in law family is very against her because they think she's very low class and the daughter of a murderer. And that's very shameful. Sadly, she, yeah, she's fighting against that as well. We're Carol is like dealing with her mother's reputation and the way that it reflects on her not as just kind of like, it's kind of funny, because it would be enough being like, you know, quote, unquote, the daughter of a murderer, but they're always there's like this class issue in there, too, where there's just like, Oh, she's just not of the right like caliber. And I think that's a that's a factor that's going on.

**J** Jessi Chartier 02:52

Yeah, I agree. I think that's, I think you're absolutely right. And then there's always so much just shame around the fact that her mother was not even just sent to prison, but was in an insane asylum.

**J** Jen Myers 03:06

Yeah, there's the issue of mental illness, which is, you know, in an environment like this, it's distasteful, something we don't talk about.

**J** Jessi Chartier 03:14

That's exactly right. That's it. And we should point out too, that this movie has Joan Crawford playing the Lucy playing the mother who's returning

**J** Jen Myers 03:21

The first like, what five minutes of this movie? is Joan Crawford axing two people to death, when she catches them in bed together? Like it is wild?

**J** Jessi Chartier 03:35

God bless Joan Crawford. She's just so good in this. And I just there's so many themes. So we should probably talk about the genre of these films that we're going to be looking at this month because I think that it has, I don't know, I really I need to dive more into this genre. I think I

really would like it. But I've only seen a handful of films that kind of tackle it in a really good way. So we're Jen, how about this? I talked about the snaps. It's fun as you talk about

**J** Jen Myers 04:02

Yeah, no, I can I can I can take this. So this month, we're talking about hag horror. And it has this is a sub genre that I think has lots of different names. I think it's also called psycho-biddy, hagsploitation. I think another one is Grand Dame Guignol. Like it's there's a lot of very colorful names for it. But basically, it describes the sub genre of films that really flourished, I think, in the 60s, and maybe a little bit after that of ageing actresses being cast as mostly kind of unstable women. And it's a genre where I feel like it some people have a lot of, I guess, legitimate criticism against against it, but also it kind of opens up these opportunities for these women to explore personas and emotions and situations that they might not have been able to do. In other types of films, that at least that's how I look at it personally, you know, like, it's not saying that this is completely unproblematic, but I think it's interesting that it really does open up this, these other elements of representation. I think, learning, you know, speaking like that, we did, we did cover last. Last year, we did Whatever Happened to Baby Jane, which I think is like the zenith of the sub genre and the one that most people know it has both Joan Crawford and Bette Davis in it. And I think that's the one that most people know as, you know, older actresses playing also very kind of sometimes distasteful characters, Betty Davis character, and that is pretty distasteful. But she, like, enjoyed that and really leaned into it. So I think it's fun for a lot of these women, at least, that's again, that's my impression, to get to kind of expand and stretch your legs and do things that are not necessarily, you know, perfectly beautiful, or perfectly pleasant even.

**J** Jessi Chartier 06:02

Yeah, and I How does that kind of play out here in Strait-Jacket? You know, I think one of the things that I saw in this movie was an interesting take that was a little bit different than what we've seen in the past, where it was not a woman who is struggling necessarily with her age. Because I think that that's what a lot of a lot of films with older women that struggle with is is like, Oh, God, I'm because you know, as a woman, so much of your time is spent being told that the only thing that's valuable about you is your beauty. And as that fe, you know, you have a significant existential crisis, because the world is basically convinced you that you are now useless. But I think what I liked about this movie was that it was I don't know, it explored, I think, in a very different way, the idea of just what it means to be a woman, which is, and then you have, which is to be very controlled, very measured in her emotions, and only to have a certain range of emotions. I mean, they the fact that they didn't put her in a jail, but decided that she was insane. You know, when really she just, it was a crime of passion, because she was so enraged. And it was almost like that broke the mind of the legal system of like, what No, that can happen. Women don't have rage, right. And so they put her in, in an insane asylum. And what's so interesting is that they, how that kind of plays out here is she comes back, and she is so afraid of everything. And she's so, submissive isn't the right word, but she's much more reserved than she was when she was younger. When she was younger, you got the impression that she was very flamboyant, and very, like outgoing and very impassioned. And they basically steal all that away from her. And you know, what's interesting, I'm just gonna add the side note. So one of my friends was a social worker for years. And I was telling her about this movie, and she's like, Oh, I wonder if they put her on laudanum, or whatever, a

particular drug? And I'm like, What do you mean, just like, because when people are clinically insane, one of the first things they'll do is they'll give them a drug that just basically eliminates their emotional state, because it allows them to be better controlled. And I was like, Oh my God, this adds a whole new level of potential because there are scenes where Lucy's like, I need my Are you taking your pills? Are you taking your pills type of thing? Right?

**J** Jen Myers 08:45

And she has like, she seems to be having some sort of like not not visions effects is the opposite. Isn't she hearing things she's having like, some hallucinations? So she is having some some strange experiences that seem to be psychologically based, which Yeah, and it doesn't really come out in the film that much. I kind of didn't even think about that angle and it is true, it seems like she could it does seem to indicate that she's continuing being medicated or that's maybe why she was able to be released in the first place like they've exactly and they've been taking it all out of her. Yeah.

**J** Jessi Chartier 09:19

And the medication that they may have put her on, which is a very common drug does also cause blackouts. So it would explain so much of the storyline of where she's like, I don't remember what happened. So for those that what happens in the storyline of why she becomes under suspicion again, is because people start dying. And she doesn't, I mean, not lots of people it's not like a spotter. But like, there is the question of like, is she the one that's doing it? And she does have these blackouts and she's like, I don't remember I don't remember I don't remember

**J** Jen Myers 09:51

and people are being killed, like with an axe, decapitated like the original two that she murdered are. So it's being It's like her MO basically, is being replicated. And so yeah. And so that is what I think is there's even so also something else to mention about this particular movie is this is directed by William Castle, who's kind of a legendary. How do we describe it? I mean, he was a bit

**J** Jessi Chartier 10:18

funny. He's like, he's like more like the common man's Hitchcock.

**J** Jen Myers 10:22

Yes. And he was a legendary kind of gimmick man. He's the one who would stage all kinds of special effects in the theaters and the the seats tingling, and the movie, The Tingler. It's stuff like that. So he was a showman. Right? And this film has like, it has a couple of those kind of gimmicks in it. But I also think it's interesting that, like it has it has the shock value of like Joan Crawford, murdering people in the beginning and all of this, but for all that, I feel like it gives

Lucy Joan Crawford's character, I don't know, she she after, you know, the, the shocking of the initial murder. She, I don't know. She's pretty sympathetic, I feel. And she's kind of like really trying to she's trying hard to get back to a normal life. And she is genuinely distressed by the fact that she's having these psychological issues, and she can't remember things. I don't know, I found her like, really sympathetic, and it makes you even more sympathetic with kind of the initial break she had of like how you mentioned that. It was it was a crime of passion, she had this tremendous rage. And now she's now she's back. And even when she's stuck, you know, she's struggling with things that's also not allowed, like she doesn't seem to be allowed to express or fear or feel anything really, that's outside of this little box that she should be in. And that really comes through in this movie for me.

J

Jessi Chartier 11:47

100 Yes. The one of the great examples of that is that so as I mentioned earlier, she lives this life, very flamboyantly, very sexy dresses for the time, loud bracelets, short style fat, like fabulous hairstyles, like very, very woman of the time, when she returns from the hospital. She's very matronly, very conservative hair, very conservative clothing, very conservative and how she carries herself. And her daughter is like, I I'm so glad you're so first off that there's no animosity with the daughter, the daughter is like, I'm glad you're home, I'm excited to have a new relationship with you. And so she takes her shopping. And there's it's very clearly indicated that Lucy's character is afraid of expressing herself in everything clothing hairstyle, because she says I am not allowed those things, because it will bring back my old behaviors. And so there's this clear connection in the storyline of these anything that is expressive, whether it's jewelry, hair, drinking, like any of these things, and she starts to lose herself. There's a scene where the fiancée, well, I don't even know if they're quite fiance yet. But anyway, Lucy's boys, not Lucy, the daughter, Carol's boyfriend comes over to meet mom for the first time. And she is wearing the dress for the first time, she's wearing this wig for the first time to make your hair look more modern. And she's wearing the bracelets and she comes down and she meets this man. And she is back to her old self, where she's flirting with him, and being seductive and being impassioned, and all of these other things. And then the moment she takes the clothes off, she comes back running back down. And she's like, I am so sorry, Lucy, I would never do that I can't wear these things anymore. It changes me. And it was just such a great little bit of I mean, it's not a very deep metaphor, but it's very clear and accessible metaphor around how women are not allowed to have any kind of emotion or express themselves, especially as they're older. Because God forbid, that means that women are human, and we can't have that, you know. So it's, it was just just a really nice little example of exactly what you're talking about, where she is being forced fit into this very flat and dry persona, and that they think that she has cured is cured. And it's probably the medication, it's probably the fact that she she's bought into the system now and she's trying, but it's just not her. It's just not who she is. And it's really heartbreaking to watch, especially as a woman in just not even modern times where it's like, I can sympathize with both elements of her both elements of wanting to express herself and be like, you know, screw you, I'm going to do whatever I want. But also at the same time being like I don't want to be othered I don't want to be ostracized. I don't want to be labeled as insane. I don't want to be and have the fallout and consequences of all of those things. So I really, I sympathize with this character incredibly much. They are incredibly deeply because As it was so accessible, and was just such a great representation of a common turmoil that women have. Yeah, absolutely.



**J** Jen Myers 15:08

And for me just kind of to go back to something I mentioned earlier in that whole, especially that scene where she meets the potential inlaws her her daughter's potential in laws and all of that, like, I feel like she's also being judged specifically as a woman of well, frankly, like a lower class, like she's portrayed as, like a tramp, basically, like, she's not classy. She Yeah, she has like her wig, and her dress and her bracelets. And she just, she's portrayed as a cheap woman, as you know, somebody who because she expresses herself in that way, is inherently not as worthy, as you know, a woman of wealth or I guess, of class would be in that sense. And yeah, and I think it does a really good job of pointing out that, in order to be seen, as somebody who's worthy and high class, she has to take all those things that make her herself and make her interesting and unique. And she has a standoff all those edges and be a completely different person. And it's yeah, this whole level of of expression is you're only allowed to express yourself in certain ways. Are you just like, inherently unworthy? I think is part of it. Because she's way more interesting when she has all of her, you know, her costume. And she's, she's, yeah, she's more fun. She's a way more fun character. And that's not to say that everybody, you know, has to be like that. But it is definitely, in this movie shown that you're not supposed to do that. That is like what ties into her illness and her crime and all of that stuff. It's all hand in hand with being perceived as low class.

**J** Jessi Chartier 16:52

Yeah, that's a really good point. And I think that it reminds me so back in the day, I'm saying the 80s Dolly Parton. Just bear with me for a second gen Dolly Parton interview with Barbara Walters. Yes. And they can't remember the exact question that Barbara Walters interviewed or question, but she said she was basically questioning dolly around, like her upbringing. And like, why she dresses the way she dresses and looks the way she looks. And Dolly Parton had said that at some point, and I'm gonna totally not get the quote, right. But I'm going to tell you the gist of the response. She had said that she was either in town she was with her family somewhere. There was a woman in town that everybody knew who looked to dolly very glamorous. And the people would say, oh, that woman is of a lower class. She's She's a, I don't know if the word was trans. Yeah, exactly. So it was like she was the, the woman in the town that nobody respected because she was expressing herself sexually or loudly, or what have you. And Dolly's response was, but I want to look like her when I'm older. And I really just respected the fact like, even dolly who is incredibly successful, and is a brilliant musician, and businesswoman. The first thing people still talk to her about is her appearance. And it's like, it's like we you just can't win. Like it just feels like you just can't win. And I think that this movie, even though it was made years ago, I mean, this was a 6263 Something like that. 6464 even though Smithson 64. Like, it hits on those things, like we they it hits on those things, which I think I feel like it was kind of progressive for the time. Maybe I'm not giving enough credit to the 60s in the movie industry. But I do feel like it was touching on something that normally wouldn't be touched on. But that's the whole point of a horror film, right? Or a psych thriller is touch on things that are not allowed to be touched on.

**J** Jen Myers 18:52

Yeah, I don't know if it was deliberate. But it also wasn't completely by accident. Yeah, I think it just because it is in this just kind of genre where you can push things right. And William Castle like to push things so and I think that this does go into we should probably talk about how this

film ends. Because there is of course a twist, twist. That's the way William Castle did he did he did twist. So the twist is the person who's been murdering everyone is actually Lucy's daughter, Carol, who has actually been impersonating Lucy, she actually has like a mask like that looks like her mother. And there's a scene where she's wearing it. And then a Lucy comes walking in and it's like, ah, there's two of them there. But there isn't two of them. Carol has been impersonating her mother and killing people. And she's hoping to frame her mother again and have her mother sent away again. So, you know, that problem is taken care of, even though she didn't reveal it earlier. It's clear that Carol was ashamed of her and she's ashamed of her not only for the crime, but I think for everything we talked about and she wanted to be able to marry her wealthy fiance and not have to deal with the whole issue. You have her mother being, you know, a murderous tramp, basically, which I say with fondness, personally, but Carol didn't want to deal with it. So Carol was the one who was murdering all this. So now we have this whole issue of all of these things that Lucy was going through. And it ended up in the daughter, who grew up to be a woman, horrified of being perceived in any way, like people perceive her mother, to the point where she will murder people to get rid of the whole problem, which clearly is not healthy.

J Jessi Chartier 20:32

Right, exactly. And it's so interesting because like from if you look at this from the 1960s, let's do a male gaze for a minute, which is, you know, a standard gaze through through this movie, that there was an implication that creep crazy is inherited, that Lucy was just as crazy as her mom. And that this was her only way to solve the problem was to murder people and get her mom sent back. But if I look at it from if, if we critique it from not necessarily a male gaze, and not necessarily I guess it would be a feminist phase, but its gaze, but it's more like this girl, it was just, it's just a repression of feelings. I don't think gender has anything to do with it. I mean, it does. But like, if you look at it without her, this is gonna be weird, because you could look at it with a gender lens, and you should look at with a gender lens. But it also for me, one of the things if you go right below that, is that it has nothing to do with inheritance. In my opinion, it has everything to do with repression of emotion, like, what happens are the opposite extremes between Carol and Lucy. Lucy expresses herself without regard. Carol is the exact opposite. She represses everything. And they both extremes end up in bad situations. Right?

J Jen Myers 22:04

The same bad situation, they both end up as murderers.


J Jessi Chartier 22:07

Exactly. And I don't think that's how the film makers intended it. I think the thing much more intended it to be like, Oh, crazy is inherited between the women. But I do think that there's something to be said about Carol's role, like super measured life.

J Jen Myers 22:23

Yes. No, I agree with you 100 percent. Yeah. And I don't think it was intended. But I think if you look yeah. I don't think it takes a whole lot also to look at it from the perspective or looking at

look, yeah, I don't think it takes a whole lot also to look at it from the perspective of looking at it and see Carol, as being, you know, the other side of the same coin as her mother. You're absolutely right. I think it's all about repression. So she's had this example of her mother, who really saw all of her emotions and murdered people, and now is locked up in an insane asylum. And so she's had that example her whole life. So she's gotten the completely opposite way where she's repressed everything and she has convinced herself that the only way to be worthy is to not be anything like her mother, and, you know, marry into this wealthy family. And that's the only thing that matters and but because she is so bought into that she goes to these horrible extremes to to try to reach that end. And that's the only thing that matters to her. And yeah, so they both end up being murderers. In fact, I'm pretty sure Carol murders more people than her mother's day. I think she's kind of by not by the numbers. I think Jan's up horse, you know, for how you want to say this. But yeah, I think there's there's definitely something interesting there. And it's like, I don't know what in the end. So what's the better path? I'm not sure. Lucy didn't murder a couple of people early on. But she seems she seems genuinely like she regretted it, and wanted to move past it. Yeah. And there was like more to her than that. Not act whereas Carol was just completely corroded.

 Jessi Chartier 23:54

Yes, that's exactly right. That's exactly right. Yeah, Carol was not as sympathetic as Lucy was, in my opinion.

 Jen Myers 24:02

Well, and that's interesting for the genre we're talking about too, because in the end, you are much more sympathetic with Lucy, the Joan Crawford character, she actually comes away with this with a lot more I think, dignity, then a lot of the other with older women and some of the other films in this genre. I think that that's something else that's interesting about this film, even though it was trying to be shocking, and it's got, you know, women murdering and things like that. At the end. I feel like the main women, the older woman is the one who kind of comes out the best in this it's this isn't like baby J and going, you know, losing hold on reality on the beach, right? This is, it's a different situation. It's actually a lot more kind of positive than a lot of other horror films are.

 Jessi Chartier 24:50


That's very true. That's very true. And speaking of hardcore, our full episode, which we're going to be recording here in just a minute, where you'll hear about next is is What is the matter with Helen and I love the title of what's the matter with Helen because it already sets me up to be pissed off like,

 Jen Myers 25:09

exactly, yeah.

 Jessi Chartier 25:11



 Jessi Chartier 25:11

It's like what? Why does anything have to be wrong with Helen? Why can't you just be Helen? But we'll talk about that in our next episode. Jen, if people want to learn more about us, where should they go?

 Jen Myers 25:25

All right, well, we have a website at [quietlittlehorror.com](http://quietlittlehorror.com) and you can find us on Twitter at [quiethorror](https://twitter.com/quiethorror) and on Instagram at [quietlittlehorror](https://www.instagram.com/quietlittlehorror). And if you would like to email us to tell us things or see if you have a suggestion for upcoming film, you can reach us at hello at [quietlittlehorror.com](mailto:hello@quietlittlehorror.com)

 Jessi Chartier 25:44

Thanks for listening. We'll see you next time. Bye